

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY S/PRS:RANDERSON:AVW

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NEA/ARN -MISS MAUGHAN(SUBST)

MRBREMER(DRAFT)

S/S - CABORG

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 197484

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: SECVISIT: POTENTIAL PRESS PROBLEM

FOR AMBASSADOR MURPHY FROM ROBERT ANDERSON

1. BARRY SCHWEID, CHIEF ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT COVERING THE DEPARTMENT WHO HAS ACCOMPANIED SECRETARY ON ALL HIS FOREIGN TRIPS, TELEPHONED ME TO REPORT AP, NEW YORK HAS JUST RECEIVED MESSAGE FROM ONE OF ITS STRINGERS IN DAMASCUS WHO HAD BEEN TOLD PRIVATELY BY A SYRIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THAT ANY AP CORRESPONDENT TRAVELLING WITH KISSINGER PARTY WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTED IN DAMASCUS. LOUIS FARIES, AP STRINGER IN DAMASCUS WHO DID NOT SEND THIS MESSAGE, HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED BY AP, NEW YORK TO FIND OUT UNOFFICIALLY FROM GOS IF THERE IS REALLY ANY PROBLEM. FYI SCHWEID WILL BE MAKING TRIP WITH SECRETARY. END FYI

2. WHILE NO INDICATION GIVEN IN MESSAGE FROM STRINGER OF REASON WHY AP NOT WELCOME IN DAMASCUS, AP, NEW YORK SPECU-
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LATES IT MAY BE BECAUSE OF STORY BY AP STRINGER IN ALEPPO

TWO MONTHS OR SO AGO ON EUPHRATES WATER DISPUTE WHEN QUOTES WERE USED SAYING SYRIANS WERE USING WATER SHORTAGES FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. WHEN GOS ASKED AP TO RETRACT STORY,

AP REFUSED, BUT AGREED TO CARRY ANY DENIAL GOS WISHED TO MAKE. GOS DENIAL SUBSEQUENTLY CARRIED BY AP.

3. SERIOUS PROBLEM COULD ARISE IF SCHWEID PREVENTED FROM ACCOMPANYING SECRETARY TO DAMASCUS. SUGGEST EMBASSY CHECK RESULTS OF FARIES'S ENQUIRIES WITHOUT ANY APPROACH TO GOS. PLEASE GIVE US FARIES'S REPORT AND YOUR ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION. SECRETARY IS CONCERNED ABOUT THIS, AND WILL WISH TO HAVE ALL THE FACTS BEFORE CONSIDERING WHAT ACTION TO TAKE.

4. WOULD APPRECIATE REPLY BY IMMEDIATE CABLE. KISSINGER

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To: DAMASCUS
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